

IN BRIEF

NOTES ON THE BUFF-FRONTED OWL *AEGOLIUS HARRISII* IN BRAZIL

The Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisi* (Cassin, 1849) is one of the rarest Brazilian night-birds, being spottily recorded from Ceará, Pernambuco and Bahia south to Goiás, São Paulo, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul (Sick 1985). Only 200–212 mm in total length and weighing 104–135 g (adult males), this small owl occurs from the coastal lowlands (50 m) to the high mesetas (1000 m) of the hinterland, inhabiting the *caatingas* and the semideciduous forests of the northeast, the *cerrado* and *cerradão* of central Brazil (Negret *et al.* 1984), some man-made landscapes, and even urban areas as in Curitiba, Paraná. Virtually nothing is known about the biology of the Buff-fronted Owl (Burton 1973, Clark *et al.* 1978, Hume 1991, Storer 1989), which is also scarcely represented in ornithological collections.

We have found that this owl is an uncommon resident in the man-made landscapes rich in palms and fruit trees in the lowlands (50 m) of Vargem da Meira, near Camaçari, coastal Bahia (c. 10°30'S, 35°40'W), where we discovered an adult incubating in the hollow trunk of an unidentified dead palm on 2 March 1985. The cavity may have been an abandoned nest hole of a parrot such as the Peach-fronted Parakeet *Aratinga aurea* or the Sun Parakeet *A. solstitialis*, which are very common in the region; and measured 60 cm deep and 15 cm in diameter, with access through a small hole 10 cm in diameter, 6 m above the ground. The base of the cavity was covered with dry cattle dung, a green feather of a parakeet, unidentified hairs, and the remains of some prey, such as the chitin of insects and bones of a small rodent. The clutch consisted of 3 ovoid white eggs, which measured 33.0 × 27.6, 33.0 × 28.0 and 33.4 × 27.0 mm (average 33.13 × 27.53 mm), and weighed 12.5, 12.5 and 11.8 g respectively (average 12.27 g).

So far as we know, the vocalizations of this species include a quavering sequence of monotonous *ku-ku-ku*... notes, slightly crescendo, 4–20 seconds long, and a single, hooting *ouuuu* (see also Sick 1985, Hume 1991).

In March 1990, we also found *A. harrisi* at Inhuporanga (300 m), Ceará (c. 4°06'S, 39°03'W), where it occurred in pasturelands interspersed among the very dry and sometimes secondary *caatinga*, probably nesting in holes of carnauba palms (*Copernicia cerifera*).

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FIRST RECORD OF CHIRPING CISTICOLA CISTICOLA PAPIENS FROM BURUNDI

On 29 September 1992 we found three pairs of Chirping Cisticolas *Cisticola pipiens* in a marshy area about 200 m south of the golf course in Bujumbura, Burundi. This species, only recently added to the East African list (Moyer & Sikombe 1992, *Scopus* 16: 55-56), was recognized by its distinctive song (Fig. 1). The birds were in a mosaic of reeds, cat-tails, rank grass, and maize and sweet-potato cultivation. They were relatively tame, singing from exposed positions on reeds and grass, and allowing approach to within 15 m. Excellent views were obtained through 10 × binoculars. Further visits were made to this site on 1 and 3 October; the song was recorded, and one individual was mist-netted and photographed. Two other cisticola species heard at this site were Red-faced Cisticola *C. erythrops* and Winding Cisticola *C. galactotes*. The Chirping Cisticolas had buffy brown backs broadly streaked with

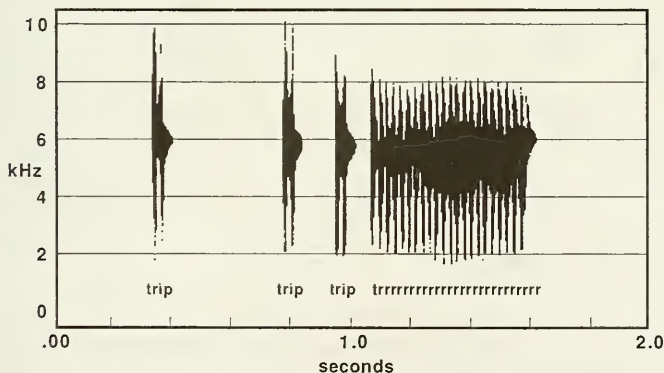


Figure 1. Sonagram of the song of Chirping Cisticola *Cisticola pipiens* recorded in Bujumbura, Burundi.